DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 358 JC 030 029

AUTHOR	Harrison, Derek
TITLE	International Education: Another View of Distance Learning.
PUB DATE	2002-10-25
NOTE	13p.; Paper presented at the Community College Humanities Association Eastern Division Conference (New York City, NY, October 24-26, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Role; *Community Colleges; *Humanitarianism; *Humanities; International Communication; *International Cooperation; International Education; International Educational Exchange; International Programs; *International Relations; *Social Action; Two Year Colleges; World Affairs

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that diversity and flexibility have been the cornerstones of the community college over the last three or four decades. Of recent interest has been the change in the student profile from that of the recent local high school graduate to the returning student, as well as a mix of international students. These international students range from the children of recent immigrants to newly arrived immigrants and refugees and children of well-off citizens of other countries. Those students come from a variety of economic and political situations, and they bring perspectives and experiences that enrich the educational community. The community college has responded with international campus organizations, language labs, multicultural textbooks, cultural events, and international fairs. This paper argues for making connections between the teaching profession and the possibilities for humanitarian action on a global level. The author suggests that community colleges put together credit-bearing humanitarian trips, particularly in light of the recent evidence of national isolation and defensiveness after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The paper concludes that the events of September 11 should encourage community colleges to broaden their outreach, and for the humanities to show that the idea of humanity has no borders. (NB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 471 358

International Education: Another View of Distance Learning

Derek Harrison

October 2002

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Harrison

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

JC 030 029

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION; ANOTHER VIEW OF DISTANCE LEARNING

by Derek Harrison

Presented at the Eastern Division Conference of the Community College Humanities Association, October 25, 2002

Many of us have careers that have run parallel (at least chronologically) to the development of the community college during the last three-four decades. We are aware that diversity and flexibility have been the cornerstones of that development. To the early emphasis on the first two years of liberal arts study was soon added the plethora of technical and career programs, followed more recently by short-term certificate studies, connections to community agencies, partnerships, special training and re-training opportunities, and much more.

Among these, what has been of most recent interest to many of us is not the curricular or program developments but rather the change in our student profile: from that of the recent local high school graduate or the returning student to an impressive mix of international students on our campuses. They are the sons and daughters of newly-arrived refugees or immigrants, or they are those immigrants themselves, or they are even well-off young people whose parents, still in the home country, have discovered the

ED 473029

benefits of a low-cost first two years on the way to an advanced degree. I offer an an example one section of a philosophy course taught last semester. Of 23 students, five were foreign students, respectively from Turkey, Hungary, Lithuania, Thailand, and China.

Obviously such students come to us from a variety of economic and political situations, and they bring to us perspectives and experiences that enrich our courses and our educational community. And we in turn have responded, with international campus organizations, language labs, multicultural textbooks, cultural events, international fairs. The result is a welcome change in the formerly local or regional perspective of the community college: our "community" is beginning to take on the look of a global one.

In-house responses to the new internationalism of our colleges are not limited to student activities. Many of us are involved with the development of courses with international or multi-cultural focuses. Some colleges now offer degrees featuring international studies or are making efforts to "internationalize" disciplines especially in the humanities and business.

Off-campus developments are even more impressive, and a little research turns up a lot of activity. I have learned of the international exchange not only of faculty but also of students and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

administrators. Community college faculty now study abroad on a variety of grants and travel stipends. One of my own colleagues at Monroe Community College is the first community college faculty member to have been awarded a Fulbright to study and teach in China; he is presently pursuing a second Fulbright.

In 1996, the American Council on International Education, a sister affiliate of the Community College Humanities Association, adopted a framework for global education in a move to "redefine the role of the community college in the context of globalization." Ideas such of that of "cultural competence", meaning the ability to interpret the words and actions of a person from another culture, or "intercultural language teaching" or the "global community college" or the need for awareness of the global marketplace are now being widely discussed. The ACIIE has developed competencies that include recognition of geopolitical and economic interdependence, empowerment through global education, and awareness of diversity and commonalities. It is developing partnerships with institutions of higher education outside our borders to develop training programs and to provide linkages and expertise.

Other initiatives are to be found in the work of Community Colleges for International Development. The objectives of this organization are to assist countries in manpower training and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

technical/vocational education, provide leadership in the development of international education, and facilitate the chance for study and exchange for community college students and faculty. The list of their activities covers many pages and many countries, from Russia and Romania through Thailand and India to Trinidad and Tobago.

So by now it's clear that we have the idea. It's all heady stuff, and if only a fraction of what is being talked about or slowly implemented actually bears fruit, this new century will provide opportunities for community college faculty undreamed of only a decade or so ago. Given our history of being among those first in line, it can be assumed that humanities faculty will not miss their share of those opportunities.

But I want today to suggest that there may be another kind of opportunity, a much more modest one, and one that lies outside the more formal plans and goals and activities just mentioned. To understand what I have in mind, it might be helpful to think briefly about some basic definitions.

The humanities are defined as the study of literature, philosophy, art and related subjects as distinguished from the sciences. A humanist is defined as a person having a strong interest in or concern for human welfare, values and dignity; also

a person devoted to or versed in the humanities. A humanitarian is defined as one having concern for or helping to improve the welfare of mankind, a person actively engaged in promoting human welfare.

What is my point? It is that we who are educators in the humanities, in the midst of all this new attention to global education, might do well to think more about the connection between the teaching vocation and the possibilities for humanitarian action on an international level.

Here I have to explain a matter of personal history. In the last 15 years, I have been fortunate to have had the resources (I mean those of time and some money) to enable me to travel to a number of foreign countries, to do short term (and in several cases longer-term) volunteer work in what are sometimes called third-world settings.

My own experiences are not the point here and needn't take our time. What <u>is</u> important is that I have had the opportunity to work in these venues with many young people. I have, without exaggeration, found myself at times in awe of them -- of their enthusiasm, commitment and dedication, of the depth and breadth of their understanding of the culture they were in, and of their attitude. They were learning, doing, and not least of all having a good time. They were contributing to the host country at the

same time that they were developing themselves. They were changing and changed.

Who were these young people? Sometimes they were part of a church group, or a team of medical or pre-medical students, or even a high school group; sometimes they were alone or with a fellow traveller. What I have not found, although admitting that my sample is a small one and my method less than scientific, is any group under the auspices of a community college.

And so I have tried, not very hard and not with much success, to change that on an individual level. It happens that Haiti has been my most frequently visited country -- eleven trips there in thirteen years. One reason for that is that Haiti is easily accessible; another reason is that, as our hemisphere's poorest country, it offers plenty to do. It also offers a wonderfully rich culture, and for those who are interested, a very troubled history and a political situation so awful as to move even the most apathetic.

In those eleven trips, I have enticed only three community college students to come with me. Actually these were former community college students, and one of them was my daughter, so my record is even less impressive.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Let's let one of those students speak for herself. Jennine writes:

"Going to Haiti in 1999 was the most influential and educational trip I have ever had the opportunity to take. Looking back on the trip, I learned more in ten days than I have in all four years of college. There is nothing like seeing how a third world country operates politically, socially and culturally first hand. Feeling the heat of the sun, smelling smoke and dust from the over-populated streets, painting the nails of a young woman clinging to life, singing with the boys in the boy's home/guest house, eating pumpkin soup and fried plaintains, meeting other people from other walks of life spending time in Haiti for the same reason of helping and learning, and witnessing the true poverty and sickness of a people who are the most kind and spirited people I have even had the opportunity to meet. I will not say that the trip did not come with an array of risks, but they were risks worth taking"

Those were a few of her experiences. What did she learn?

"I have become a much more humble person in my life, due to experiencing a life sometimes without electricity, running water, television and chocolate, and depending on conversation, reading and exploring for entertainment. I can say that I have also become

much more aware of what happens in foreign countries and have made it my duty to educate myself on what happens here in America. I will say that my generation is not lazy and careless, but not educated enough to know what happens in our own country today, much less any other country, to be able to make choices in regards to voting and/or forming opinions. The media is a heavy hand in our life and what the media "teaches" us is not factual. If I were an educator I would strongly urge my students to get out and experience life in a third world country only for a short period of time. When they return to this country and realize how lucky they are to live in a democracy, I guarantee they will play a more active role in educating themselves on international issues, national issues and local issues. More than all this, students would have an opportunity to gain a sense of power and selflessness."

Not bad for a ten-day trip and considering that she didn't even get college credit.

The logic of my argument here should be clear enough. Putting Jennine's enthusiasm together with that of the many other young people I have known in similar settings, I am simply asking: why not? Why can't community college educators, and especially those devoted to the humanities in the broad conception of that term, put together credit-bearing humanitarian trips on a more organized and

thorough basis than I have done so far?

Jennine has listed some of the benefits from her trip; it is not hard to imagine many she didn't mention. At this point, a favorite line from Kierkegaard comes to mind. "What I really need", he wrote, "is to get clear about what I must do, not what I must know, except insofar as knowledge must precede every act." And the benefits, I would add, are not limited to the students and faculty who might make such trips. The needs of developing countries and their people are staggering, as numerous as they are varied. Any of you here today who have travelled in places like Haiti know that. Work and learn groups cannot solve their many problems, but it has been my experience, as it has been for many others, that any effort to alleviate shortage or suffering, however small that effort, does make just that much positive difference in people's lives. And they will say so.

Another benefit that bears mentioning has to do with the image of Americans, particularly Americans abroad. One of the first remarks I heard in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks was in the form of a question: why do they hate us? Like some of you, perhaps, I have a number of answers to that question; those answers are not part of what I am talking about today. But I suggest that what I'm calling humanitarian work and learn groups can also bring about a change -- whatever they do for students, faculty or

suffering populations -- in the stereotyped image of Americans as self-indulgent, internationally clueless, and indifferent to the problems of people outside our own borders.

Are there risks here? I suppose there are, in the form of possible illness or threats to physical safety, maybe even psychological risks of culture shock, disgust, anxiety, or rejection. To that I will say that my own experiences have featured very little risk. Media portrayals of troubled countries, I have discovered on more than one occasion, are greatly exaggerated. Common sense medical and safety precautions, except in the most extreme cases, are all that are needed.

To that I would add that risk, we have been learning in the past year, is not limited to life outside this country. I am reminded of the remark of a colleague, made as I was leaving for Haiti a few months after September 11. "I'll bet", he said, "you're glad to be going to Haiti where you'll feel safe." I am also reminded of a remark, more serious, of Paul Tillich: any action taken on behalf of justice involves some element of personal risk. If there <u>are</u> any risks in such trips, I would rather that they be for the reason of social justice.

What I am proposing is not for everyone. There are many reasons, practical ones as well as those stemming from personal

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

perspectives or educational philosophy, that need to be considered. Still, I would be happy to think that some community college educators in the humanities, those who are willing, could go outside the commendable plans and activities of the kind mentioned at the beginning of this talk and organize groups to live briefly, to work and to learn in third-world settings. International students are coming to us; maybe it is time that we go to them.

During the past year, our political zeitgeist has been evidencing what are for me disturbing signs of national isolation and defensiveness. That is all the more reason for the community college to broaden its ever-expanding outreach and for the humanities to show that the idea of humanity has no borders.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC®

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: International Education: Another View of Distance Learning

Author(s): Derek Harrison

Corporate Source: CCHA Eastern Division Conference, NYC

Publication Date: 10/25/02

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Derek Harrison	Printed Name/Position/Title: Derek Harrison, Professor, Humanities
Organization/Address: Monroe Comm. College, Rochester, NY 14623	Telephone: 585-374-2809 FAX:
	E-Mail Address: jharrison@monroe.cc.edu Date: 12/11/02

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC®
Clearinghouse For
Community Colleges

University of California, Los Angeles
3051 Moore Hall
Box 951521
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521

EE 45

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2000)